






3 0600 00034 8699

PS  
3503  
A196  
L4  
1928

# CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

This book is due on the last date stamped below.

Failure to return books on the date due will result in assessment of prescribed fines.



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2022 with funding from  
Kahle/Austin Foundation

*The Legend of* QUINCIBALD



*By the Same Author*

PH.D.S.

ANIMULA VAGULA

GUINEA-FOWL

*And Other Poultry*

*Harper & Brothers*

*Publishers*

*The Legend of*  
QUINCIBALD

*by*

LEONARD BACON



HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

NEW YORK AND LONDON

MCMXXVIII



*The Legend of Quincibald*  
*Copyright, 1928, by Harper & Brothers*  
*Printed in the U. S. A.*  
*First Edition*  
*I-C*



TO

M. S. B.

*Where was only grief and strife,  
She sowed lilies in my life.  
May they prove a diadem  
For her head, who planted them.*





# CONTENTS

## PART ONE

### *Quincibald in Mediocria*

Page 1

## PART TWO

### *The Exploration of Cockaigne*

Page 29

## PART THREE

### *The Battle of Argothica*

Page 57





## INTRODUCTION

TO ANTICIPATE criticism has generally been considered poor judgment on the part of a writer, and may be so in this instance. To the reader who is by nature hostile to the methods I have chosen, I have nothing to say whether of praise or blame. He has his limitation as I have mine. But to the reader who has some disposition to discover in these verses certain aspects of his own mystery, I should like to say a word.

This poem is an attempt to deal with the stuff of personality in the only way in which that stuff can be dealt with—that is to say, symbolically. The persons and things which have a place in the poem, have that place because no simpler expression will perform their function. I wish it could, but for the present at least such simplicity is impossible. A reader who surrenders himself to the succession and flow of the images, will, I think, find a meaning in the poem, and that no light one. A reader who endeavors to torture the symbolism into allegory, and the allegory into what he would call plain English, will find what I never meant, and what in point of fact means nothing. If he desires to do this I cannot stop him, and indeed have failed as far as he is concerned. But I hope with all my heart that there will be readers who, by experience painful or otherwise, have learned that at times fantasy is more practical than logic, and that a mechanical sorites can be the most deadly enemy of truth. Such persons will I hope find in this poem an order of things congenial to their imagination

within and to their contact with the world without. They may not be better than others, but they are a great deal luckier.

The first part of the poem, "Quincibald in Mediocria," was delivered as the Phi Beta Kappa Poem at Yale College, December 6th, 1926. The Chapter of the Society was kind enough to print it in its record of that festival, with the oration of Professor Tinker. I acknowledge the Chapter's courtesy and that of the Yale University Press in permitting me to reprint it here. The song in "The Battle of Argothica" has appeared in The London Mercury whose Editor, Mr. J. C. Squire, I have also to thank for permission to reprint it.



*The Legend of* QUINCIBALD



# QUINCIBALD IN MEDIOCRIA

## *A Daymare*

### I

HE WAS hanging on the brink of an idea as the night in its  
descent  
Came sword-like down behind him, where he wavered,  
'twixt his weakness and intent,  
On the edge of thought precipitous impending, whose  
infinitely high  
Clear pinnacles, all roseate and crystalline, were stabbing  
the dark sky.  
But their beauty and their clarity made terrible the dark-  
ness, overfraught  
With its silence sempiternal, and thought failed him, a  
proclivity of thought.  
Abysmal blackness swallowed up his palaces. Those  
altitudes of flame  
Were gone. They had no local habitation, or the shadow  
of a name.  
And he felt his grasp unloosing, then sensation of eter-  
nities of falling,  
While the voices of infinities came yelling, through the  
nothingness appalling,  
The absurdest appellation the ambiguous infinities have  
dreamed  
In the aeons of their geologic periods. They chattered  
and they screamed

### I

4

Responsively the idiotic syllables, a dithyrambic sound:  
"Oh, Quincibald! Ah, Quincibald!" while chaos whirled  
nonentity around.

And he, who had long ago been someone in an actual  
otherwhere,

Found himself nowhere in particular, with an idiot nom  
de guerre.

Beware, beware of edges of ideas when mysterious night  
is brewing

Her magic all around you, the wild witchknots of identity  
undoing,

Or become, like Quincibald, a naked spirit, and as utterly  
alone

As he, surrounded by that dark, fantastical and solider  
than stone.

For lonelier than Dante, where blear Sheol and obscene  
Gehenna glare,

Stood Quincibald. Nor lion, wolf nor leopard, nor Ver-  
gilius were there.

Blank beneath the ramparted escarpment, as Ygdrasil's  
summit, tall,

Lay the terrifying emptiness, untenanted by anything  
at all,

With Quincibald bewildered in the midst of it, irrelevant  
and small.

So he fled from nothing in disastrous terror unto nothing,  
so afraid

That he shuddered at the glimpses of his spirit's unim-  
pressive little shade,

While the darkness deepened round him, and the empti-  
ness grew clangorous in his ears;

And he whimpered as the whirlwinds of mortality erased  
despairing years,  
And all the things he knew were going under, when he  
saw before him there  
A something reared high against the nothingness, enormous  
and foursquare,  
Like a signboard erected o'er the devils at the bottom of  
the Pit,  
And, half-beheld, a feeble writing serpentine was  
writhing over it.  
Feebly it flickered and it faltered, yet a man might read  
it clear:  
"This land is Mediocria. What was it that you hoped  
who enter here?"  
Lonelier than Dante at the gateway, with the sinners  
going in,  
Stood Quincibald, endeavoring to remember what his  
hope might have been.  
A sudden and a horrible certainty struck through him  
like a spear,  
That desire had been o'erthrown by the tempestuous  
paralysis of fear,  
And his spirit would grow empty of all vision or the  
shadow of a dream.  
Only would be darkness and the shattering of the customary  
scheme;  
Only the gross darkness like derision, with impenetrable  
grin,  
And a mean infinity about him, with the power to suck  
him in,

As the whirlpool sucks down vortices vertiginous the  
 bubble or the straw,  
 Dragging down the imponderable and ponderable, immu-  
 table as law.  
 It drew him in the darkness preternatural, and he could  
 not hope to cope  
 With the horrible, enormous Inappeasable that obliterated hope,  
 Till, as in his agony he stood there, an idea thrilled his  
 brain:  
 "Why should this loneliness disturb me, or the brutal  
 mise en scene?  
 "The mediaeval intellect of Dante, these abysms may  
 appal,  
 "But laughter at their palpable inanity is better after all,  
 "Laughter that abolishes the terror, howso terrible  
 it be,  
 "Laughter at the laws and the fatalities that have played  
 their game at me,  
 "Laughter at the sentimental Heavens and the senti-  
 mental Hells,  
 "Which are shadows of my pity for myself, who am some-  
 body else,  
 "And must wander through eternity under this most  
 idiotic name.  
 "Nay! Laughter, though the laws and the fatalities can  
 prove they play no game.  
 "Their powers of their pretence shall not perturb me,  
 while my spirit stands aloof  
 "To descry them. With the laws and the fatalities be  
 the burden of that proof.



"I will not bother for them, though they bother or bother not at all."

So Quincibald crawled on beneath the signboard, as a blinded mole might crawl.

## II

DOWN an ebon chasm he went stumbling, through a world without a sound,

Till he saw on a precipice beneath him some being lying bound,

As white as a glimmering corpse of marble, and as lonely, and as grim,

Fast riveted to adamant with manacles that gangrened every limb.

And intolerable eyes were staring at him as he halted in amaze,

Strange eyes that viewed the sources of the darkness with immitigable gaze.

And even as Quincibald considered that phantasm of the glooms,

Darkened all the night above him, dreadful with reverberating plumes,

That, dropping from the star-deserted firmament, descended with a swoop.

And a shadow by the bound mystery strutted, with a cackle and a whoop.

And lightning in the firmament outstreaming revealed it, and he saw

The golden and the scarlet-flashing coverts of a horrible macaw,

Ridiculous and splendid and enormous, with a book in its  
claw.  
And its croak thrilled with irony mechanical, a desolating  
sound,  
Reciting monotonously Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound."  
And the hero that was manacled to adamant, contorted,  
with a scream  
Agonizing, shrieked: "Send back the vulture. I cannot  
bear the dream.  
"With the cockles of my heart, let him make merry, and  
my liver once again  
"But it's too much to ask of any Titan, this pick-picking  
at the brain,  
"This music out of madness, that for ever is the shadow  
of my pain.  
"For the shadow dims the substance of the agonies before  
me or behind,  
"Like a cataract clouding over the brain's eyesight, till  
the intellect goes blind,  
"The shadow of the terror of the pygmies that are troubled  
in their mind.  
"For the living night has overwhelmed the pygmies in  
Mediocria dwelling,  
"And descended on the Titans with a darkness that is  
dreadful beyond telling,  
"And their high imaginative power of poetry and tragical  
romance  
"Has dragged them down to foot in Mediocria the medi-  
ocre dance.  
"There they wander in the waste lands platitudinous,  
commonplaces interchanging,

"And their pinioned wings have lost the Empyrean where  
their wont was to be ranging.

"For they have forgotten in the solitude fatality and law,

"And they mutter with the pygmies that the Vulture is  
less than the Macaw

"With its literary gossip, painted plumage, and its atmos-  
phere of awe.

"I am bored, bored, bored with Mediocria, and compro-  
mise, and fear.

"A vulture with appropriate beak and talons would have  
royal welcome here,

"Though the game-laws which obtain in Mediocria are  
uncommonly severe."

And Quincibald stared upon the Titan 'neath the light-  
ning-dappled sky,

While the horrible macaw rolled sagaciously its yellow-  
circled eye,

And he said to the Titan: "I am troubled by a preter-  
natural fear."

Said Prometheus: "Yes, my brother. You're another.  
That's the reason you are here.

"It's the way of all flesh in Mediocria, while the universe  
shall roll.

"Don't tell me. You were frightened by the shadow of  
your pitiable soul,

"And conceived you knew the purer sort of suffering, fine  
varieties of woe.

"And you have, no doubt, a certain fellow-feeling for the  
griefs I undergo,

"Though your liver is too white, and your heart-action  
undeniably is weak,

- "And you much prefer emotional poetics to the vulture's  
iron beak.
- "Your like blow by on every wind of doctrine, every  
philosophic flaw,
- "And they think that they learn something as they  
hearken the rhetorical macaw.
- "I would have died, but, born to immortality, was  
destined to endure
- "The dull perennial misinterpretation of perennial litera-  
ture,
- "All schemes, all theories, all stillborn philosophies that  
nobodies deduced.
- "From the thought of brave men dwelling in a Universe  
where Terror roves unloosed.
- "I meant to be amused at all that balderdash, but the  
spirit is too weak.
- "Flesh might bear it, but I couldn't see the humor, for  
you know that I'm a Greek.
- "And little to the purpose are philosophy and poetry  
and wit.
- "So the Terror got me down in Mediocria—my malison  
on It.
- "Drew me down from legitimate fire-stealing to the  
tumult and the herd,
- "To hear scared idiots prate of immortality, and the  
cackle of the bird.
- "I'm a Greek, in whom go bitterness and beauty for ever  
half and half.
- "Never yet was one of us save Homer that discovered  
men could laugh.

"Aristophanes for instance is as mirthful as a baby's epitaph.

"Go on and find that laughter. I can dream it, and I fervently desire,

"Remembering the constellations smiling at the snatching of the fire."

### III

So QUINCIBALD went slithering down the precipice with that upon his mind,

When he was aware of something rushing like a hurricane behind.

And feathers beat above him in the lightning-slitted darkness, and he saw

Swooping in the flashes that prismatic and detestable macaw.

And a sky-devouring flame rose up behind him, and volcanic crashed the sound

Of the new-delivered laughter of the Titan, for Prometheus was unbound,

And was fleeing like a flame from Mediocria, his dwelling for a span,

For he had seen in Quincibald incarnate the absurdity of man.

And Quincibald took comfort from that laughter reechoing so strong,

For it roared with a sweet sonorous rhythm like the cadence of a song,

Though he heard the macaw above the racket, and it cackled, and it spoke:

"No wonder if the laughter be Titanic, for you are the  
joke.

"I must find something suited to your intellect that will  
aptly symbolize

"The hideous limitation of your genius, and your spiritual  
size,

"In words of one syllable, and written from a childish  
point of view.

"I'll start with Uncle Remus in the dialect. I'm clever  
at it too."

And it plunged into Joel Chandler Harris but desisted  
with a shriek,

As far away a man began singing in the middle of next  
week,

Singing in a quaint forgotten cadence with the voice of  
a gnome:

"Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home."

And there was an old nigger with a rabbit, who came toiling  
up the steep,

Humming the old plantation melodies so delicate and deep.

He trembled at the flicker of the lightning, but somehow  
without awe

Considered the chrysemythristic glamor of the horrible  
macaw.

And a wise smile played over his black countenance,  
benignant and absurd,

As he said to the rabbit, "Bre'r Rabbit, what the devil is  
that bird?"

And the rabbit cocked aloft his ears lopsided in the lightning's  
flash and shine,



And replied: "One of the garrulous psittacidae quite out of your line.

"Such birds are loquacious, but infrequently have very much to say.

"And forgive me, if I mention the propriety of marching on our way."

And the nigger said to Quincibald, laughing with a humor unabated:

"Ever since he met the Queen of Hearts in Wonderland he's plum sophisticated.

"But he's sensible, although he talks so biggotty as you never seen or heard

"But, child, for the land's sakes tell me where you got yourself that bird."

And Quincibald considered the free spirit of the race that is not free,

And replied: "It is my theory that the creature has attached itself to me,

"Because I gave too much of my attention to opinions about things,

"And when I dodged the facts, that wild chimaera overcame me with its wings.

"And it's threatening to recite me all the fables that are published in your name."

"Don't you take on, child," said Uncle Remus, "They're funny just the same.

"But what was you all doing on the mountain? It's a queer place for sho'.

"I ain't skeered of it no mo', for I'se a going where the good niggers go."

But Quincibald, who feared to touch that question, had the fortitude to say:

"Kindly tell the demigod Prometheus that I'm glad he got away."

"Old Bre'r Prometheus," said the nigger, "Why, I knew him in the jungle."

"But stealing fire's a mighty risky business which of course he had to bungle."

"He took his demigodhead mighty serious. Did he surely get away?"

Said Quincibald: "He had the great advantage of my company today,

"Although he said he had no sense of humor, which is utterly absurd,

"For he has escaped from Mediocria, and I'm saddled with his bird."

Chuckling and mumbling Uncle Remus went singing on ahead.

But the rabbit wagged his flopping ears at Quincibald, and courteously said:

"I trust you will forgive the indiscretion of an amicable word."

"The rôle for you is to ignore entirely the gyrations of the bird."

While overhead the darkness was made hideous by the squawk of the macaw,

Squawking as if centipedes and scorpions were gnawing at its craw,

Squawking: "I shall never be defeated, who am much the better part

"Of science and religion and philosophy, and seven-  
eights of art;

"I who gleam, where wisdom plumbs the unsounded,  
with a radiance that stuns;

"I who prove the purposes conflicting in the progress of  
the suns.

"I paralyze the orthodox and heretic, as I veer and as I  
twist.

"How should I die, while human logic and the tameless  
mind persist?

"The self-styled Buddhist, Christian, and Mahometan  
have me in their eye,

"For I am the sign by which they conquer and the thing  
for which they die.

"Oh, watch in the spiritual lightning, how I glitter and  
swerve,

"As brilliant as I once flew flashing over Matthew Arnold  
and Saint Beuve.

"When Protagorases failed to do me honor, the Bom-  
bastuses sufficed.

"And those who would not follow have no followers like  
Pythagoras and Christ.

"Consider how I coruscate and dazzle, and the intellec-  
tual gleam

"Of my bright and ebon eye as I play skittles with the  
universal scheme.

"Take up your cross and follow me." But Quincibald  
could hearken, thin and far,

The melody, African-American, like music from a star.

And he shot a glance behind him up the mountain,  
where the lightning at its play

Revealed the nigger climbing, and quite properly, as  
Harris used to say,  
Bre'r Rabbit with sophisticated courtesy was showing  
him the way.

IV

AND a grey-and-silver dawn began breaking under clouds  
moist and big,  
And Quincibald beheld a man approaching in a Ramillies  
wig,  
Only that and nothing more, except a sea-shell he had  
gathered by the beach  
Of that ocean he discovered, whose horizon is beyond a  
man's reach,  
That ocean whose white waves comb crashing 'neath the  
infinite blast,  
Eternal, as it will be in the future, as it has been in the  
past,  
That ocean where Arcturus is an atom that is driven by  
the tidal  
And primitive emotion of things that the brain cannot  
bridle.  
Yet he saw it by true imagination of the clear-seeing mind.  
Naked in his wig the man stepped forward, and a cat  
came behind,  
And mewling after her a tiny kitten, and the man with a  
smile  
Turned his large Olympian eyes on Quincibald all inno-  
cent of guile,  
And observed: "I, too, was guilty of my lapses, for biog-  
raphers have written

"Of the two holes pierced in my door-panel for the cat—  
and for the kitten.

"However, to be wholly unreliable is parcel of their art.

"I am, Sir, entirely at your service, Sir Isaac Newton, Bart.

"You may hark to the strange music in my sea-shell, like  
a riddle or worse—

"The murmurous and whispering sweet voices of the  
vaulted universe,

"And her infinite and rhythmical motion, now soft and  
now strong

"Like the thunder unloosed, or like the dying sweet fall  
of a song.

"Out of the opalescent hollow do the voices whisper clear,

"Yet here am I astray in Mediocria in the moments of  
my fear.

"There is always something ludicrous in weakness, in a  
man or in a throng.

"And I fancy to observe that phenomenon's why the  
cats came along.

"But I talk about myself, a human tendency and  
mediocre, too.

"Let us change the theme and speaker for a moment,  
while you tell me about you."

And Quincibald confessed his curious nickname, but  
could give him no address.

Still he made a brief account of his adventures and his  
dubious success,

Narrating with a quite romantic vividness the strange  
things he saw,

And his views about the demigod Prometheus and the  
pestilent macaw.

Sir Isaac heard him out with much urbanity, while  
playing with the neat  
Tied ringlets of his wig, and said: "Pray tell me, where  
is this parrakeet?"  
And when Quincibald looked round to find the terror  
that had mocked him in the glooms,  
Lo! it shivered at his feet, with drops of moisture on its  
flagrant draggled plumes.  
It shivered at his feet, now and then blinking idiotically at  
The circular and gem-like yellow eyeballs of that scien-  
tific cat.  
And from time to time it cleared its throat convulsively,  
endeavoring to talk.  
But, with nothing much to say, the fruitless effort sub-  
sided in a squawk.  
And Sir Isaac considered it amusedly, without shadow of  
disdain,  
Observing merely: "Quincibald, I fancy it won't bother  
you again.  
"Though it flashed in fearful splendor mid the light-  
nings with a horrible noise,  
"For that which Mediocria has fashioned, Mediocria  
destroys.  
"Farewell! Good luck, and summon up your spirit in  
despite of all macaws,  
"And remember, 'Never put your trust in parrots' is the  
first of Newton's Laws."



So QUINCIBALD went marching down the mountain, while  
 the snow began to fall.  
 And the miserable macaw limped fluttering after him,  
 quite desolate and small.  
 And its indigo and scarlet were diminished, and it didn't  
 scream at all.  
 And out of the storm-cloud, on a stallion that was paler  
 than a whelk,  
 Rode a man with the laurel on his forehead, and behind  
 him came an elk,  
 Which hopped along stiff-legged through the snowdrifts  
 for it boasted n'er a knee,  
 And ever and anon it would lean wearily to rest against  
 a tree.  
 The rider had a hook-nose like a falcon and a sombre  
 falcon-eye,  
 That defeated the unreconciled dull landscape and ironi-  
 cal grey sky.  
 And he rode, as saith the good Andrew Marvel, "inde-  
 fatigably on."  
 He had never been at home in Mediocria, and was soon  
 to get him gone.  
 But he pulled up the pallid horse beneath him, that was  
 puffing with the weight,  
 And he interchanged high compliment with Quincibald,  
 collected and sedate.  
 Armipotent his eye burned, and about him was a glamor  
 and an awe,

- As he said: "Is it true that you're a poet, as I guess by  
the macaw?
- "I myself once played with elegiacs, and was tickled with  
a straw.
- "We all have our weaknesses. My foible is the elk  
without a knee,
- "That in some sense is symbol of my nature, the imprac-  
tical in me,
- "However well I rode the pallid stallion, unaffrighted,  
and as calm
- "When Brutus stood before as at my triumph with the  
paeon and the palm.
- "In kneeless elks and brainless men I trusted, and my  
vision died forthwith,
- "For kneelessness is mythical, but brainlessness unhap-  
pily's no myth.
- "I must have been uncritical and careless, for the clever  
and the just,
- "Whom I trusted for their cleverness and justice, were  
the traitors to my trust.
- "And the end of my innumerable victories was my empire  
in the dust.
- "For poor old Antony and Augustus, and that mediocre  
lot,
- "Thinking power for its own sake a pleasant notion,  
which it certainly is not,
- "Put their spokes into the wheel of all my project, which  
accordingly fell through.
- "No wonder men think riding on pale-horseback was all  
that I could do,

“Though I was a good grammarian, and my histories are  
very largely true.  
“At least, I was not made for Mediocria, though Octavian  
prevailed.  
“But the elk, I observe, is growing feeble, and the pale  
horse has paled.  
“The best of luck, although you are a poet. But I’ll tell  
you what to do.  
“I’d wring the irised neck of that Stymphalian macaw if I  
were you.  
“Ave atque vale,” and he brandished his laurel in the gale,  
And he galloped the pallid stallion onward till it grew yet  
more pale.  
But the elk had leaned against a rotten alder and fell over  
by the trail.  
And, not having any knees, it was incapable of rising any  
more.  
So it only exists in a stray paragraph of Cæsar’s Gallic War,  
A circumstance the author of that history had never  
bargained for.

## VI

THE macaw hobbled piteously to Quincibald, one wing  
trailing lame  
And he picked it up compassionate and carried it,  
because it was a shame  
To let such color perish in the solitudes of desolating snow,  
For all that he remembered how it mocked him, and the  
diabolic glow

Of multicolored pinions in the lightning of the night-time  
of his woe.  
And he marveled at that magnitude of terror, for the  
creature was so small,  
And ridiculously fluffed its dripping plumage in a  
miserable ball,  
And obviously derived no sort of comfort from his  
scrutiny at all.  
And while Quincibald observed its faded color-scheme the  
blizzard whistled by,  
And left behind it only argent frostiness and mare's-tail-  
chamfered sky,  
While a candid sun blazed down on Mediocria with a  
humorous round Eye.  
The mountain summits smoked with orient vapor that  
the yellow sun-rays kindled,  
And every puddle with fierce light was winking, by the  
snow-drifts as they dwindled,  
While the softer airs drove swift along the ridges and so  
odorously blew  
That the silver cerecloth vanished and the gentians were  
sweating with dew.  
And there on a rock over against him, in the glory of the  
sun,  
Quincibald beheld a woman sitting in the habit of a nun,  
Robed in a pitch-black folded garment that flowed like  
the descent  
Of the cataracts of midnight. And about her was a  
hyacinthine scent.  
And her face was all beauty inarticulate, and full of her  
desire,

Like a bride's at the bed, or like a martyr's in the halo of the fire.

And Oh! Her voice pierced through his soul like heart-break or a delicate sweet air,

As she said to him: "See what in Mediocria we goddesses must wear.

"I—that on the blue Mediterranean where he coileth in his caves

"Was as liberal and as naked and as noble as his salty white waves—

"I, that could laugh at love in sunshine, now must whimper in the gloom

"In the land where their birth and their begetting is as dreadful as their doom;

"In the land where they have made pure beauty shameful, and their joyfulness is stale,

"Where they hide their little death behind deception, and my bosom, 'neath a veil.

"I go where I shall yet again rise naked on the summit of the wave,

"Where simplicity is not upon the cross, nor my beauty in the grave.

"The dolphins shall foam white about the scallop-shell.  
How the breakers will foam,

"And the winds of all the oceans blow softlier! For I am coming home.

"Wild loveliness is mine, and the sweet pleasure that pulses and that beats.

"And the young men talking with the maidens in the lyrical streets,

“And remembrance that is inner self of beauty as the  
spirit of the song.  
“And I shall forget these silly ceremonies, and once again  
be strong,  
“As strong as the sun, as the sap rising, as arbutus, as a  
wave,  
“And stronger than the terrible vision, or the cross, or  
the grave.”

## VII

SHE ceased, and there came music up the mountainside,  
melodious and strong,  
Delicious as the lark at Heaven's gateway, with his morn  
and even song.  
And choruses in contrapuntal cadences were rolling the  
refrain:  
“Calloo! Callay! O mother dear Jerusalem! O Palaces  
in Spain!  
“Oh, there was once a King of Thule, and a Princess past  
compare!—  
“Pack clouds away, for mine eyes dazzle when I kiss  
Perenna's hair.  
“Art thou poor, yet has thou golden slumbers? And is  
beauty but a flower?  
“Full fathom five lie pomp of heraldry and petulance of  
power.”  
The shouting and the singing around Quincibald came  
loudening like a tide,  
And he saw a dome-browed man who was walking with a  
roebuck at his side—

The stag sequestered, struck in Arden Forest by the  
arrows of its foes,  
That Jaques once beheld with big tears coursing down  
its innocent nose.  
And the man saw beauty actual and incarnate, no  
imaginative gleam,  
And Quincibald beheld that visionary, yet was portion of  
the dream  
Where Falstaff was roaring in the tavern, with Hotspur  
that would dare  
King Harry to his face—men 'neath the excellent blue  
canopy of air,  
Look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, majestic  
roof,  
All fretted with the orient fire, while Ariel on the bat's  
back soared aloof  
Mid cloud-capped towers and palaces of vision, discours-  
ing yet the fine  
Keen note of faëry piping leucocholy, neither mortal nor  
divine.  
“Our yesterdays have lighted fools,” thought Quincibald,  
“but who was half so daft  
“As I, or half so serious in the solitudes? How Prome-  
theus must have laughed!”  
And lo! in a flash appeared the Titan, on the summit of  
the ridge,  
While a vulture in the blue wheeled above him, as little as  
a midge.  
Prometheus cupped an ear to hear the singing as it bub-  
bled up ethereal,

And his laughter came bellowing stentorian and full and imperial:

“There is terror in the highest and the lowest, far away and hard at hand,

“That the man of understanding understandeth that he cannot understand.

“Hence to bid you to ignore the bird above us would be only to insult your

“Superior intelligence, but, Quincibald, it’s nothing but a vulture,

“Despoiled of awe, though it be ne’er so loathesome in the hour of its power,

“A bird, which, having supped on its last carrion, its own fellow shall devour,

“Spite of will to survive, and hookéd talon and insatiable maw.

“But tell me, in the name of all that’s marvelous, what’s come on our macaw?”

And he looked, and the macaw with staring feathers twitched panting, goggle-eyed,

And it tried to dance one more last dance macawbre, but it couldn’t, and it died;

While the vulture shot from Heaven down upon it in one terrible glide,

And its coal-blue talons rended it in pieces without passion or pause.

The feathers looked pathetic on the greensward. So perish all macaws.

And Prometheus on the height far-gleaming shouted:  
“Every man of sense deduces



"From facts like this that vultures were created so  
macaws might have their uses."

He gleamed and he departed, and Orphean waxed the  
music and the song.

Innumerable violins and 'cellos, and a jubilating throng  
Of epic-slingers, sonneteers, and satirists "sincerely in  
the wrong."

And there profane and sacred love were dancing 'neath  
their clouds of Titian hair.

Sang the bird of loudest lay in all Arabia, and the phoenix  
of the air.

There Lewis Carroll led a female jabberwock with seven  
thriving pups.

There was James Branch Cabell with a novel, and Bryan  
in his cups,

And Torquato Tasso brandishing a goosequill, while the  
great Disraeli shivered

At the clangor and the harmony sonorous of "Jerusalem  
Delivered."

There flamed the scarlet Cardinal of Este, incarnadined  
and stiff,

On whom rode Ariosto like Astolfo on the fiery hippogriff.

There Doctor Freud was punching our unconsciousness  
beneath their various belts,

And explaining that a something in the dreamword is  
always something else.

And there were viewless muses non-Euclidean, and the  
questionable shape

Of a dubious biologist, evolving from an inconclusive ape,

While Robert Burns and Philip Sidney sported arm in  
arm with Tam O'Shanter,

And Socrates ran shaking up the hemlock in a Florentine  
decanter.  
And Matthew Arnold danced the high fandango with  
imperial Victoria,  
Both muttering, though neither really meant it, "non  
nobis sit gloria."  
And the prophets and the priests vociferated. The disci-  
ples were not dumb,  
And beauty and vulgarity commingled in reality's fierce  
hum.  
Yet Quincibald could hear the faëry piping, and he fol-  
lowed in pursuit  
Of the music that was sweeter than a psaltery of ten  
strings or than a lute—  
The faëry piping that no man heard ever, being rapt  
above the pole,  
But only 'mid the roar of Mediocria, by the passion of  
his soul,  
That which enchanteth all the commonplaces, and the  
turmoil, and the dirt,  
Till, like the flame from flint, outflashes beauty, and a  
healing from our hurt.  
He might not pluck the heart out of the mystery, yet,  
patent to his mind,  
Flared a parable in midmost Mediocria of the pageant of  
mankind.  
And the sight of them quite dwarfed his tribulation, and  
their passion, and their care,  
The unbearable birth and dissolution that it is their lot  
to bear.

And he understood the foolish in a measure, and the wise  
in some respects,  
Though them, from too impertinent understanding, their  
intelligence protects.  
And he thought about the idiocy of thinking, and irrational sublime  
Humor that escapes from the prosaic in a laugh or in a  
rhyme,  
And last about himself, who had been troubled—for  
what? And by whom?—  
Infinitely flattering himself in his intellectual gloom.  
Could he laugh at the nemesis pursuing, at inalterable  
doubt,  
He who sought to 'scape from Mediocria, yet had never  
clambered out?  
Could he laugh at them who suffered a like torment? for  
he knew they were his like,  
Though the parallel was not in every instance of a character to strike.  
Aye he would—the strangest most delicious laughter.  
How it bubbled and outpoured!  
And the pageant all laughed back in friendly fashion, for  
they too had their reward  
Enduring in themselves, though beauty perisheth, whose  
transiencies must pass.  
They had feared as he had feared, and had been asses just  
as he had been an ass,  
Quintessential, undiluted, homogeneous, elemental, unalloyed,  
And delivered to the joyless contemplation of chimaeras  
in the void.

No Christ would come to pick the pathway for him, no  
prophet show the road.  
It was there for him to travel, could he find it. For that  
much had been bestowed,  
To blunder like a poet through the darkness where the  
wild idea hides  
In a populated desert whose chief feature is deficiency of  
guides.  
So Quincibald, within himself considering, saw how rare  
it is, alas,  
Yet how comely it may be and how reviving to discover  
one's an ass.  
He would take for his ensign the ass triumphant that  
must labor onward blind,  
Bearing without plaint, it knows not whither, all the  
burden of the mind.  
The ass, the stubborn, and the undefeated, that no great  
deliverer rides,  
Oppressed by daily things, foot by foot climbing up the  
naked mountainsides,  
The common creature, sired in Mediocria, that has  
patience to endure  
And hardihood to suffer what intelligence is powerless  
to cure.  
Therefore he laughed when unto him with nickering from  
the valley beneath  
Came the ass plodding up through Mediocria with a  
palmleaf in its teeth.

# THE EXPLORATION OF COCKAIGNE

## I

I WHO sang the torment and the travail and the wander-  
ings of the soul,  
Besiege again the gorgeous gates of poetry in an unfamiliar rôle.  
I am coming from the deep and hollow country, clanging  
symbols once again  
With the strange tale of Quincibald's adventures, and the  
conquest of Cockaigne,  
The country of the mingled gall and honey, whose hither-  
most frontier  
Is the Island of St. Brandan, where the skerries of Hy-  
Brasil first appear.  
To get there you must hire strange quartermasters, you  
must follow the White Whale,  
Or tack close hauled behind the flying Dutchman in the  
tushes of the gale.  
You must sign on Caliban for able seaman in the tavern of  
yourself,  
Green Tristram, Sintram, and Diego Valdez and Ariel  
the Elf.  
You must sail beyond the purgatorial whirlpools, where  
Ulysses was hurled  
Down the endless sucking waters on the eternal limitaries  
of the world.  
Only there, only there shall you discover in the horror of  
the night

The owl-truth and the moth-truth of the spirit of the  
darkness and the light;  
Only there, in the spiritual twilight by trial know the  
truth,  
And behold the fearful flowering of manhood and the  
perishing of youth,  
Only there, at last looking upon all things with unper-  
verted eyes,  
See for the first time a dead leaf falling or a winter  
planet rise.  
Now the ass had shown the way through Mediocria that  
Quincibald must tread  
And he followed on behind the patient creature and the  
beast went on ahead.  
Over a dull and sodden plain they plodded, and they  
never sought the height  
Where Quincibald had met the various Titans in the  
storm and in the night.  
Only he met countrymen dejected, with their labors  
overladen,  
And here and there a youth bearing burdens, or a care-  
mobled maiden,  
All wandering like himself, and dull and weary from a  
labor without end,  
All looking for some lost unreality, and for peace, and  
for a friend.  
And as he wandered ever through the lowland, far off he  
heard the ghost  
Of an Oceanic sound, and ere he knew it, he had come  
unto the coast,

The long, low, sallow shore of Mediocria, where the white  
breakers crash,  
And the boats that push out against the surges go in  
general to smash.  
And he lay down and slept overweared on the echoing  
grey sands,  
And, in a dream, heard waves on wild shores, dancing  
their eternal sarabands.  
Dawn staggered up the sky. He woke and plunged him  
in the silver wave and clean.  
And the porpoises beyond the surf came leaping from the  
pure abyssal green.  
And forth from the land of Mediocria came his young  
comrades wending;  
Came Tristram with the silver harp-frame broken, done  
at last with his pretending,  
Forgotten all the courts where he had dallied, and his  
courtiership and grace,  
Having seen in the depth of his own darkness silver vision  
of a face;  
Came Sintram with the lance whose haft was rotted by  
mysterious blood  
Of the beast that dwells beneath the nether darkness  
where the dreadful cromlech stood,  
The sacrificial place, where beauty alters into horror, the  
profound  
Depth beyond thought, deprived of light, the region  
where our voices have no sound;  
Came Diego Valdez who had found all victory the illusion  
of the mind,

Bound now across the main-sea, more enduring archi-  
pelagoes to find,  
And to sail that South-East passage inaccessible, that  
borders the insane  
Frontier of the unviable Antarclicas, and the country of  
Cockaigne.  
And last of all came Caliban and Ariel linked together  
by a chain.

## II

OUT past the smashing surf they brought the long-boat,  
and felt the living gale  
Move, like the unborn seeking for deliverance, in the  
belly of the sail.  
All day they sailed, tacking and fighting into the fierce  
eye-balls of the wind,  
All day the ropes rattled, and the waves rushing at the  
bows crashed and dinned.  
There was bold Diego Valdez at the tiller, there was  
Sintram at the sheet,  
And Ariel and Quincibald were sea-sick, but they said it  
was the heat.  
And Tristram in the bows plucked at the harpstrings at  
the falling of the night,  
While Caliban refrained from dancing hornpipes, having  
grown far too polite.  
And far off on the luminous horizon rose a tottering white  
sail  
Leaning to the elemental buffet of the bludgeoning gale,  
A great ship caught aback, that heeled and staggered,  
and at length went yawing off,



Rolling in the nightmare seas incredible, obsidian trough.  
About she came, bewildered, quailing, fleeing from the  
hurricane's dark eye,  
Defeated though her noble topsails towered to the firmam-  
mental sky.  
And in the stern-sheets bold Diego Valdez was dancing  
on his toes,  
As he yelled: "We have outsailed the Flying Dutchman.  
He is beaten. There he goes."  
And before them, as it were a stream of star-shine, they  
saw silverly descend  
A cataract of argent-shining vapor that they might not  
comprehend.  
They were in it. They were of it, felt strange tangence,  
as the longboat flung high  
On the crest of an incomparable wave to the summit of  
the sky.  
Vast curves were gleaming, the wild intersection of  
uncomprehended spheres.  
Sky-music and sea-music intermingled for a second long  
as years,  
And upon that chord the longboat, yet staggering, shot,  
and suddenly did pass  
From the wild obsidian sea unto an ocean of luminous  
glass.  
And Caliban looked out, and rose suddenly with a mis-  
erable cry:  
"O God who art my innermost reality, are we sailing on  
the sky?  
"Lo, underneath our forefoot is Orion, looking upward  
through strange seas.

- "Shall we bind them where they scatter their sweet  
 influence, the linkéd Pleiades?  
 "That I worshipped, that which lighted all my darkness  
 is fallen 'neath my feet,  
 "And above is mine own emptiness unpierceable by  
 living light or heat.  
 "O horrible hour defrauding me the hopeless! O exe-  
 crable height  
 "Whence men on pinnacles of desperation look down  
 upon their light."  
 But Ariel wrenched fiercely at the shackle, shouting:  
 "Miserable clown,  
 "Slave to idealisms idiotic, there is splendor there.  
 Look down.  
 "Shall we lose Cockaigne because of you, poor cockscomb  
 that beheld the nether sky,  
 "And flinched from upward staring constellations like a  
 fer-de-lance's eye?  
 "Bull Strength, 'tis you must heave and haul the marble  
 on the Cytherean sides  
 "Of glamorous mountains in whose womb eternal the  
 white Galatea hides.  
 "Deeper than e'er plummet sounded, deeper than the  
 chasm of a dream,  
 "I'll drag you through your own lost infinities to the  
 light and to the gleam,  
 "To the light and to the gleam, to the true darkness, to  
 the spear and to the cup,  
 "To reality in face of irreality. Then, idiot, look up.  
 "Consider, lump, how many actual terrors there will be  
 for you to dread,

"Ere evil dreams possess, or your thought rend you to a  
spiritual shred."

So Caliban sank whimpering in the sternsheets while the  
comrades stared out board,

As it were at a drowned universe beneath them, a deep-  
flaming golden horde.

Still, they hung on the outer edge of all things, on the  
oceanic glass,

Looking down from the boundaries of infinity where  
time did not come to pass,

Gazing far into the heart of all the universe while bright  
helices were whirled,

Where the planetary particles were threading all the  
world-lines of the world,

The roots that shoot tendrils through infinity by their  
life-giving power,

The roots that end in mighty suns material, that nourish  
what a flower!

Four-petalled, opening on a wizard cosmos, to whose  
heart—to whose heart

We may come, we may come upon the pinions of a  
science or an art.

They are saved, who dreaming ever in the shadow of the  
terrible root,

Conceived there was a flower, and haply after the bloom-  
ing-time a fruit.

Thereof they dreamed, hanging by force fantastic like the  
Vulture o'er Imaus,

Till Quincibald heard a wind arising behind them out  
of Chaos.

Away they went, a milky way behind them, while  
clarions of brass  
Bellowed over the crystalline surface of Oceanic glass,  
That presently began a long slow heaving, as the wild  
whirlwind pressed  
With the weight of all the horror of the vacuum on the  
argentine breast.  
And here and there the rims of spiral nebulae foamed  
terrible and white,  
The maelstroms down which the darkness rushes to the  
inmost heart of light.  
Right in their track a lip curled white and whirling, and  
the heavens sank concave,  
The prow of her dropped from the infinite, dipping to  
the jawbones of the grave.  
And Ariel snatched the tiller from Diego shouting shrilly:  
"Hold the clown  
"I know these seas—the wreath-whirl of Andromeda—  
Hang on. I'll steer her down."  
Down they whirled. Fell the walls of all the universe,  
disastrous and dire.  
Under them dropped in a portentous spiral the cataract  
of fire.  
And they crashed into a world of light and darkness, and  
of silence and of sound,  
No more to brood in nothingness untenanted of universes  
drowned.  
And Sintram by the sheet thrust his lance outboard in  
the silver flood of flame,  
And drew it forth, and clear and white and glimmering  
from the fire divine it came.

And the shaft blood-eaten, by the living water's life-  
burgeoning power,  
Put forth from every grain a candid petal of the white  
horse-chestnut flower.  
And solemn fire lit the dark face of Caliban while divine  
Ariel bowed  
His beauteous head, and his bright hair o'ershadowed his  
forehead like a cloud.  
And the lance of Sintram glimmered like a riding-light,  
while far far away  
An astronomer sat pondering the orbit of that year's  
comet A,  
Which he thought might be presently visible in the early  
evening sky,  
Till the object unaccountably vanished, he could not  
determine why.  
For somehow he did not hear the harp of Tristram twang-  
ing soft, twanging soft,  
That played the comrades down the ethereal torrent from  
the heavens high aloft.  
They swam out of his ken, and their far music he had not  
the wit to hear,  
For the eye of the average astronomer is better than  
his ear.  
On they swept in the shadow of black stardust or the  
open heaven's glare,  
Down the hurtling rapids of Orion's scabbard or starred  
Berenice's hair,  
Till the cataract, narrowing, straitened to a sword-blade  
with a piercing point of light,

To which they were hurled by mad momentum from the  
summit of all height,  
They felt the keel grate on forgot infinities. The bul-  
warks were scraped  
By the palpable immensity of darkness, unperceived and  
unshaped.  
She hurled a light-year onward, shocked and reeling, and  
suddenly broke through.  
Underneath they felt throb familiar ocean, over head  
authentic blue.  
And Caliban rose up from where he squatted, with a  
croak like a crow:  
“Outboard. Outboard ahead, Diego Valdez! On the  
starboard bow, Land ho!”

### III

ALL the day long they watched Cockaigne's far moun-  
tain-tops that delicately stained  
Like a spilt wine the far away horizon, but however hard  
they strained  
The sea-rips, and the cross-tides, and winds off-shore still  
defeated their intent.  
And at night-fall they lay weary in the longboat, wholly  
baffled and forespent.  
And about them drifted over calming water wild laughter  
of the loon,  
While the far aurora darted long green lances at a red  
gibbous moon.  
But Ariel linked by the chain to Caliban cried out: “In  
the deep—

"In the deep! Overboard with you, my monster, and bathe before you sleep."

And the twain went souse into the pitchy water, and Caliban's lament

Was drowned within that womb of overwhelming as over they went.

Quoth Tristram that still plucked with restless fingers the harpstrings at his side:

"Our clown seems less than happy in his fortune to be chained to such a guide,

"What went he forth to see? A sea-weed shaken in the turning of the tide?"

But Sintram, lifting high the shimmering lancehead, answered: "Tristram, have a care.

"In the deep strives the spiritual Ariel. There is light and terror there.

"There is living light and a wild moving horror and execrable things

"Finning the desperate depth may draw the longboat with their undershadowing wings."

Scarce had he spoken when the voice of Ariel 'neath the gunwale shouted shrill

"It comes, it comes! Give us a hand aboard there. Heave aboard boys with a will."

They drew him up, and haled the half-drowned Caliban aboard with might and main,

That for the first time blessed by his god Setebos the inexorable chain.

Breathless they gazed upon the breathless Ariel that stared with eyes of doom,

Where by the very bows broke from the water a silver-foaming plume.  
Thither leaped Sintram, snatching up a life-line which he knotted to the spear.  
And Diego Valdez, reaching for the tiller, bellowed:  
"There she blows. Stand clear."  
Vast curving arms out of the sea were lifted, reaching blindly for their mark  
While Ariel shrieked aloud. The spear of Sintram flew out in a huge arc.  
The reaching arms dropped, as by a vague agony struck suddenly and quelled.  
Over the sea they tore while in the stern sheets the mad Ariel yelled:  
"It is that which sucked all day the blue waters, the terror underneath,  
"The backward drawing thing, but I and Caliban have looked it in the teeth,  
"The monstrosity that swallows all things utterly, the master and the man,  
"Whether he be Quincibald or Ariel or Ban Ca-Caliban.  
"For this hath Sintram watched by the dread cromlech, and in the silver of the sky  
"Hath cleansed the spear—And Lo, Cockaigne before us, how her palisades draw nigh."  
And they looked, and behold the longboat racing up a silver-stricken bay.  
While the moon smote the towering summits of the mountains far away.  
And in the bows Sintram and Tristram wrestled to jerk away the spear,



And in the very surf, hauling and heaving, by sheer  
strength they wrenched it clear.  
With its insane green arms outflung, the monster lay  
lashing on the shoal.  
And its blood spread all around it in the moonlight like a  
darkling aureole.  
While Quincibald cried out: "Cockaigne, my country,  
by the passion of my soul!"

#### IV

THEY only heard three little witches singing, as they  
issued from the wave,  
Singing in a cracked and quavering cadence: "Oh, the  
way to the White Cave!  
"The way to the White Cave, where we are going, let  
'em follow us who will.  
"There is peace there, and the morning-thrush is quiet,  
and the nightingale is still."  
The voices died and all about great silence began heavily  
to hang,  
Yet Quincibald heard a voice sing within him, and this is  
what it sang:  
"I know sweet valleys where prevail the white throat  
and the nightingale,  
"And where dim heights of cloud-bank sail, casting long  
shadows down  
"To darken the soft sward beneath, where crocuses cast  
off the sheath,  
"Beside the brook that shows its teeth to speckled trout  
and brown.

“And once, long, long ago it seemed, there was some  
dream I should have dreamed,  
“When sun-light through the young beech streamed, and  
winds were murmuring low.  
“Surely it was a delicate vision, but I am grown a dull  
precisian,  
“And things that I can see and touch, are all the art I  
know.  
“Ah, sight and touch, ah overmuch you captured in  
your merciless clutch,  
“And left me less than nothingness in a dull world like a  
stye.  
“Out of my wood the smiting gales have driven away the  
nightingales,  
“And through the cloud wrack Venus pales in a desolated  
sky.”  
“Ah desolated sky,” lamented Quincibald, and he felt  
he could have wept,  
Such a passion of grey grief through all his spirit from the  
grievous music swept.  
Such grief of all the things that should come after, or that  
never would be more.  
And outwearied he lay down upon the sand-hills of the  
sea-resounding shore.  
And sick of heart, with him all his good comrades lay  
down at his side,  
And slept upon Cockaigne’s re-echoing foreshore till  
the night fell out of stride.  
They woke in the red dawn where the wild waters were  
hammering the strand,

And orchidaceous flame struck the white summits of the  
shining inner land.  
And they stood upon the shore gazing inland, hearing  
wisdom that speaks  
To the souls of all men, desolate, confronting inaccessible  
peaks,  
And the peach-bloom light had faded on the mountains.  
Came the full light of day  
And Quincibald knew he and his good comrades must  
depart each his way  
Up the foothills and the heights, uncompanied,  
through the wilderness unknown  
To find the pathway to those silent summits in a fashion  
of his own.  
And off they went. He heard the harp of Tristram for a  
moment twanging clear,  
And caught one glimpse athwart the linkéd copses of the  
silver-flaming spear.  
Then he turned him to the hills and went onward up a  
gradual ascent  
Through the forest of the overarching cedars with tre-  
mendous larches blent,  
That presently gave way to stunted bushes and a world  
of haggard stone,  
Lifeless and still and warm, where he felt little and  
unweaponed and alone.  
It was all high plateau, yet it felt hollow. There was  
horror in that ground  
Empty of life, and bright as a skull sun-scorched, and  
innocent of sound,

Save that beyond a high rock he heard quaver a cracked  
and rippling stave  
Chanted by ancient voices thin and distant, "Oh the  
way to the White Cave!"  
And the air shook and a pulse beat in his ear-drum, that  
defrauded him of wit,  
For, as he struggled on beside a rock-rim, he half stum-  
bled o'er a pit.  
Lifeless! Oh Christ, all living writhed within it, the  
prurient, obscene  
Essence of life, that hath defiled all beauty, elemental  
and unclean.  
With a scream he leaped aside, reeling and stumbling  
from the horror-spewing hole,  
Feeling as he leaped vile fingers plucking at the shoulders  
of his soul.  
A nightmare voice screamed in him like the trumpet of  
the utmost day of doom.  
"Conquered o'erthrown. The man in you goes down-  
ward on his belly to the tomb."  
With that sight in his eyes and his ears quivering to that  
fierce inward drone,  
With hopeless hands he swarmed up the white rim-rock,  
and hung there on the stone,  
Crucified, gazing back o'er his shoulder at the horror in  
the pit,  
At the pulsing and contraction and vile motion of the  
ghastly life in it.  
Like death it seemed to pluck at him, when sudden, like  
a planet of blue fire,

A bird out of the hollow skies came drifting in a slow  
gigantic gyre.  
Once, twice, thrice on scarcely moving pinions o'er the  
scabrous pit it stole,  
And as it passed, he heard great voices singing at the  
summit of the soul:

“Did you see them low flying,  
From the height, from the height?  
Vast plumes slow plying?  
The pageant of flight?  
Did you hear the gulls crying?  
Did you hear the doves sighing  
Ere the sunset crashed, dying,  
Through the great gates of night?”

“Nay! For me but one bird,  
Lapis lazuli blue,  
Through the green canon stirred,  
Where the late light shone through.  
Blue-burning, iridescent,  
A sharp sapphire crescent,  
Through moss-green shadows,  
Sword-swift, it flew.

“Ah, why flashed the blue pinion  
Turning in air,  
Beyond all dominion  
Of my thought or my care?  
Past all my dreaming,  
All being, all seeming,

Beauty redeeming,  
Why were you there,

“In the cañon hanging  
One moment so?  
Over waters clanging,  
You flew below  
Through charm’d light slanting,  
Enchanted, enchanting,  
Through moss-green shadows,  
That I might know

“The beauty I feared,  
And, fearing, spurned,  
And that disappeared  
Soon as discerned  
One flash blue-burning  
That left me yearning  
For a strange learning  
Yet to be learned.

“Up on the mountain  
As I stood,  
Where the wind-fountain  
Poureth her flood,  
I scarce knew whether  
Flashed the blue feather,  
So flamed together  
Brain and blood.

“How should it be,  
So small a thing,  
Sudden beauty  
Sharp as a sting,  
Enthralling,  
Thrilling,  
My sadness stilling,  
Upon me falling  
From a bird’s wing?”

So Quincibald heard the strong voices singing at the  
summit of the soul.  
And he turned and gazed at the dread pit beneath him.  
There was nothing but a hole,  
And a brown lizard playing on the lip of it, that scam-  
pered on the sand.  
Yet the sweat was not yet dry upon his forehead nor the  
blood upon his hand.  
And the muscles of his thighs and of his forearms felt  
paralyzed and stiff,  
And he hung yet in fantastic crucifixion to the cheek-bone  
of the cliff.  
But he reached up aloft, clutching and grasping with the  
right hand and the left,  
And swarmed over a lip of rugged serpentine, and  
scrambled up a cleft,  
And found himself at last gasping and breathless at the  
crest of the ledge,  
Whence he saw across the plain white stainless mountains  
on the dim horizon’s edge.  
A great task he thought, and he for it but little and inept.

But heart was in him now, and in the solitude he lay  
down and slept.

v

HE WOKE while dusk over Cockaigne stood trembling  
with a visionary gleam,  
Fabulous and dreamlike as reality and real as a dream.  
And the sun, beset by furious sun-dogs, sinking, was  
pulled down into the West  
And his blood stained the faraway lone summits that  
Quincibald must breast,  
The summits that retire before the climber, and the  
heights all men assail,  
Despairing for the loveliness and danger that they cannot  
countervail.  
He marched in the grave evening not yet lightless, but  
shadowless and still.  
But presently he found him in a valley, 'neath the hollow  
of a hill.  
A milky place it was. Gigantic wreckage of rocks about  
was strewn  
Between vast walls of argent stone as lonely as a valley  
in the moon.  
Helpless he stopped and a sad throbbing passion in his  
soul began to range,  
To be so thwarted in a world so beautiful and tragical and  
strange  
He was a stray hound questing for a beauty that for  
evermore was lost:  
"Have I sold my soul for light in the blind heavens,  
never reckoning the cost?



“For this did I sail from the Obsidian to the Crystalline  
sea?  
“For this have I forsaken my dear comrades that were  
faithful unto me?  
“Here is but Death that all men may have lightly, that  
never yet have striven  
“In the underdeep, or aureate abysses of the cataracts of  
Heaven.  
“As well as I they die, who have not troubled the pale  
waters profound.  
“They die,” but the words on his lips perished as afar  
rose the sound.  
A whisper of faint song came, faintly breathing as a voice  
from the grave,  
A shred of failing music echoing, echoing “The way to  
the White Cave.”  
And a last streak of light, twixt the cliffs slanting, slid,  
softly discovering  
Irradiant blue wings o’er the shoulder of a giant boulder  
hovering.  
And in the perishing light, streamed the pinions for a  
moment, like a flag,  
And were gone. But beneath he saw a portal in the  
hollow of the crag.  
Blundering like a blind man he went thither, through the  
ever thickening gloom  
And entered into that transcendent darkness like a ghost  
into the tomb.  
And the darkness hung lead-like upon him, till some  
memory of wings

Woke, throbbing at the harsh immutability and dissonance of things.  
And he cried a great cry in the pluméd darkness that brushed him and that touched,  
And reached out into palpable horror that grappled and that clutched.  
And his right hand seized on a ferocious something, but he gripped and he grasped,  
Though the terrible talons of the creature like a saw his forearm rasped;  
While his left closed soft on soft wings pulsating with a delicate beat.  
One half of him was beauty, one half battle that near swept him from his feet.  
And crashing pinions smote, while brushed against him the gentlest of things  
And the claws tore while throbbed divine rhythm, and prodigies of wings  
Dragged him as up through oceanic hollows, and as through a wave  
Grey light through white translucent rock came dropping in the darkness of the cave.  
And in that spiritual light together for the first time he saw  
His captives, a huge owl with yellow eyeballs and infuriated claw,  
And closed in his left hand softly pulsating a great glorious moth,  
With the iris on its wings, untainted color like an Aztec feather-cloth.

He cast them free foreknowing what a glory should be  
theirs in their hour,  
As the one tore its prey, and the one settled in the calix  
of a flower.  
They were essence of the spirit, light from darkness, and  
they never could depart,  
The two halves of all things, and henceforward the two  
halves of his heart.  
Under him darkness and the light above him. Incom-  
mensurable wings  
Led up through the White Cave where dawn was break-  
ing over men and over things.

## VI

ORIGINAL dawn over Cockaigne's pale mountain-tops  
rushed scattering her flame,  
When Quincibald up from translucent caverns to the  
fiery summit came.  
Under the flaring heights the isles lay sombre in the  
shadow underneath,  
And the argent and ultramarine ocean closed them in like  
a wreath.  
And as the light quickened and went pouring down the  
shadowy scarp,  
Far off among the rocks he heard music like the twang  
of a harp.  
And a needle-point of light gleamed far below him 'neath  
the precipices sheer,  
Where slowly up the rock-face Sintram labored with the  
flower-shafted spear.

They were coming each his own way, but Diego had  
lingered behind,  
To help the chain-bound Ariel and Caliban an easier  
path to find.  
All five at length they stood on the white marble of the  
height we cannot name,  
And looked at Quincibald and at each other, and won-  
dered why they came  
To conquer beauteous barrens, the stale summit, and the  
desolated height  
Afar from men, and lonely without comfort to the left or  
to the right.  
And there they might have died of lonely triumph. The  
invulnerable stone  
Walled in their souls. And they felt weak and little, and  
diminished and alone,  
Aghast they sate, and with a blinded vision, but Quinci-  
bald arose  
For a light was growing upward in his spirit, as a summer  
dawn grows.  
A light beyond vision or desiring, and transcending hope  
or choice.  
And he looked at his comrades where they cowered, and  
he lifted up his voice:  
"In the marble hides the white Galatea, in the rock's  
pallid womb,  
"That we came forth to find. And we shall find her for  
that is our doom.  
"Topple yon rock with hide-bound strength, my Caliban.  
And, Sintram, by your leave

"I must have from you the flowery lance blood-tempered  
for to carve and for to cleave.

"But ere I hew the rock, yet remains for me another  
task to do.

"Ere I search the immortal stone, there yet is iron I am  
fated to hew.

"Come hither then my close-linked comrades that have  
suffered what pain,

"Searching for the miraculous Galatea. I will shatter  
the chain."

Through the link he thrust the diamond-sharp edges, and  
Caliban's wild cackle

Mingled with Ariel's burst of wizard music at the rending  
of the shackle.

Heaved Caliban at the rock base but Ariel had vaulted  
in the air,

Clutching and tugging at the steadfast marble, wild  
with will to overbear.

Over it came, hurtling and crashing downward, and a  
terrible tone

Like music and like grief sang round the summits at the  
shattering of the stone.

And Quincibald forthwith into the marble began to cleave  
and hew.

But nothing issued forth beneath the spear-blade for all  
that he could do.

Yet, as the fisher knows how in dark water the rose-  
spotted salmon swims,

He was ware beneath the stony integument of the silver  
flashing limbs.

In sweat and grief of spirit labored Quincibald, but  
chiselled from the stone  
Only grotesque and manneristic patterns that never were  
his own,  
And phallic shapes and brutal hackneyisms, the ordure  
of the arts,  
And dubious simplicities defrauded of their necessary  
parts.  
All was defeat, and barren commonplaces, and beauty  
unwrought,  
And weary hand and will unstrung within him, and paralysis  
of thought  
In the lonely Gethsemane of creation without end, without  
end,  
And the blind eyes at the blind marble gazing that he  
could not comprehend.  
Wild voices cried within him of lost beauty irretrievably  
foresworn,  
Harsh blasphemy of fact, and veils of sanctities irre-  
mediably torn.  
“Ah stupidity of heart,” they yelled, “what hard inflex-  
ibility of hand!  
“How should you see divinity in marble that you do not  
understand.  
“You of all men to find white Galatea in the marble’s  
central glow!  
“Ah Quincibald what sophistry persuaded you it ever  
could be so?  
“In vain, in vain the argentine bosom, and the white  
immortal gleam.”

But a whisper smote the voices dumb within him, "In a dream, in a dream.

"Over zealous, over zealous, sweating seeker of divinity unknown,

"Too hard you labor to coerce the marble, Oh separate from the stone!

"Rush into it and perish. But flow out of it in a glory of line,

"And creation of compassionate beauty and wild virtue of design,

"The spiritual grace, the living majesty, unattainable, unhewn,

"Owing not any digit of her beauty to the sun or to the moon,

"Shining by light intangible, and tameless, and utterly her own,

"The divine, the unloosed Galatea, the spirit of the stone."

Wakened the force of Quincibald within him like a river that broke

Its way through barren land, and he knew hardly his own voice as he spoke.

"Ah Spiritual Voice," he cried "I know not if you be or if you seem.

"In a dream' you said,—Delicious Galatea—but this is the dream.

"In a dream—In a dream it was vouchsafed me, in a vision to divine

"That beauty in an attitude of music, in a rhythm of star shine.

"You flame for me indeed, red maple blazing, or the sunfire down the west,

"I that by travail of the soul came hither to the argentine  
breast,  
"Loveliness uncreated, whereof little do I care what men  
may deem,  
"Having risen from the stone to Galatea in a dream, in a  
dream.  
"Ah comrades of that vision, by labor overwhelmed and  
sore distressed,  
"We have climbed what heights together, and descended  
what declivities unguessed!  
"And what strange suns shone on us! What mad starlight  
hath touched with its beam,  
"Ere we might see the white Galatea in a dream, in a  
dream,  
"Flaming up from the deeps of the spirit beyond time,  
beyond test—  
"In a dream, inmost truth of all reality. And the flower  
of the Quest  
"Shall bloom for us hereafter, on wild oceans where the  
spitting whitecaps cream,  
"For us, who saw the white Galatea in a dream, in a  
dream."



# THE BATTLE OF ARGOTHICA

## I

LIFE moving in strange darkness, and Death motionless  
in radiance of light,  
Between the glare and gloom perpetual rhythm of the  
depth and of the height,  
Oppressed the brain of Quincibald in doldrums of the  
spiritual sea.  
Fled was the vision of white Galatea and the dream he  
could not dree.  
Rocked the longboat in long swells of the seas breathing,  
in languor and mischance.  
Withered and drooping hung the silver petals on the  
shaft of Sintram's lance.  
And alive to him seemed only a grey sea-bird, crimson-  
wattled and grotesque,  
That rolled its eye over the sad companions with a  
humor futuresque.  
Dust fell upon the sea like dry rain dropping from  
unpierceable cloud,  
Born on the sea's edge, where smoke rose up ever with  
rumblings long and loud,  
Not thunderous but crackling and staccato or with hol-  
low-sounding thud  
Of the shattering of pumice, or steam bursting through an  
avalanche of mud.  
And a murky fire burned darkly on the sky-line like a  
withered rose of blood.

A current drew them thither over water like slime or  
like oil.  
Windless the sail hung, and the six companions were  
languid from their toil  
In the outer ocean, where they had heard only the white  
albatrosses scream,  
Questing for the white Galatea in a dream—in a dream.  
This, too, was dream-like, but of a sad favor, and trou-  
bulous to the mind.  
A rotten sea they sailed, beneath a firmament grown  
suddenly blind.  
And weakness was upon them, and such breathlessness  
as overtakes the soul  
Drawn by deep forces that it understands not, and out  
of its control.  
Night caught them on the wide enwombing waters, where  
like dying men they waited.  
And the smoke grew ever thicker, and in darkness, the  
black petrel's gargon grated.  
Larger, before them through the murk, and higher, rose  
the sullen blot of fire,  
To which the deep's power swept them, whether willing  
or in spite of their desire.  
And Ariel with blinded eyes glared dimly through the  
overwhelming dark,  
And nothing saw. And it was the brute Caliban that  
suddenly cried: "Hark,  
"The breakers." Through the breathless night came  
pounding the clamor and the roar.  
Helpless they drifted toward the fire that glimmered at  
the dark's glowing core.

Roughened the unseen waters underneath them with a  
swirling and a coiling.  
Swifter they ran, down-plunging on waves shattering,  
and battering and boiling,  
On through loud-crashing waters rising hungrily to over-  
whelm the hull,  
Till a white stretch of surf right before them rose bellow-  
ing like a bull.  
Through it they shot while the whole sea behind them  
like a catapult drave  
Their clanging bows high up the grating shingle from the  
power of the wave.  
And Caliban leaped out with the painter, shrieking  
shrilly, "First ashore!"  
Ere Diego Valdez lurching in the stern-sheets could  
unship the steering oar.  
Hopeless that ground felt in the touching darkness that  
had swamped the earth and sky.  
They felt the grains drop from the sullen mountain, hot,  
desolate, and dry.  
And Quincibald felt a strange man within him, and won-  
dered, "Is it I?"  
And the voices of his friends spake to him ghostlike, as  
the hot wind crisped his cheek.  
And what could a man say to put heart in 'em, if a man  
had heart to speak?  
He lay down on the beach, and heard the mountain where  
it muttered far away,  
And yearned for the morning, if that country were  
capable of day.

OVER the East spread slow a sallow greyness, a pale  
 cadaverous light,  
 And Quincibald leaped like a flash from slumber. Yet  
 the shadow of the night  
 Lay heavy all about him. But beside him sat a figure in  
 a shroud  
 Blacker than the concentrated darkness of the inner  
 thunder-cloud.  
 Horror and grace was round it, and wild influence as  
 ancient as the earth  
 Seemed breathing from the creature, whose eyes watched  
 him all devoid of grief or mirth.  
 And suddenly he knew her, the black spirit, the shadow  
 in the soul,  
 The reflection of the dark, to whom all human in the end  
 must pay their toll.  
 "I was with you long ago," she said to Quincibald, "But  
 you wist not it was I.  
 "Too long—too long—and in all times and seasons like a  
 dream you put me by.  
 "Now you and I must deal with one another underneath  
 the fatal sky.  
 "This is a strange land that men understand not"—For  
 the darkness was clearing,  
 And between clouds of smoke disastrous headlands and  
 bold summits were appearing,  
 Though the sun clove not the pall save at adventure  
 through thinnesses and rips,

And wizard light bathed him and her together, brown  
gleam of the eclipse.  
And before them reared a white marble pillar where the  
wild light upflared.  
And out from the four corners of its capital four stony  
devils stared  
At a world destroyed beneath in a prodigious desolation  
of grey dust,  
Where not a lizard moved and not a spearhead of auda-  
cious grass could thrust.  
“But where are my good comrades?” cried Quincibald in  
that world of dust and stone.  
“They sleep,” said the creature, “He who comes to me  
must come to me alone.  
“It is not meet that men should have companions when  
the pity and the error  
“Of the spirit is set free, and he stands facing his evil and  
his terror.  
“But others come to meet you here, the creatures, my  
children whom you made  
“In mystical unions of life quenchless in the terrible  
shade,  
“That lies under all things, my darkness that you lived  
but to deny.  
“It is here—It is here, and before you in the midst of  
it am I—  
“Its mistress and yours. From my embraces how should  
a man escape?  
“Who move in the shadow invisible without form, with-  
out shape.

“With my side of things becomes you to have dealings, to  
discover what they mean,  
“All the life that you erased and put from you, the  
hateful, the obscene,  
“The ignored, the crushed, the hidden, the forgotten that  
burgeon and are rife  
“In the shadow of my desolated darkness on the other  
side of life.”  
She ceased, and Quincibald afar heard voices that were  
crying underground.  
And the earth beneath him shook, and rat-like pattering  
in the smoke rose all around.  
And ape-like things out of the quaking pumice crawled  
mowing and mopping,  
And whined around him. From their jaws loose-clacking  
a slaver was dropping,  
That hissed on the hot grit—Odd countenances that he  
gazed upon transfixed,  
Half a dozen diabolic faces with his own features mixed,  
The thing he would not be and yet fantastically in a  
manner had become  
In the byways of the spirit inarticulate, unspeakable, and  
dumb,  
The false pride and the yet more false humility, than any  
pride more vain,  
The shadows of himself, beings detestable and ghastly  
and insane.  
“You know them,” said the veiled thing, “You created  
them. They are mine. And they are yours.  
“And you thrust them into darkness where their wretched  
and disastrous life endures.

“What will you do with them, and me their mother, in  
whose deep translunar womb

“They found the hopeless essence of creation and this  
fearful life and doom?

“Here surely is evil and horror, whereof I am the fount.

“’Tis a far cry to white Galatea, and the glory of the  
mount.”

Quincibald’s spirit vomited within him, as he looked on  
that array.

With a groan from the whining dark fantasms he turned  
shuddering away,

And cried out neath the cloud a great cry strident with  
the terror that raved

In his soul cast down by its own dark creation, that never  
could be saved.

Gone! Gone the argent Galatea, and the glory and the  
gleam,

And beauty damned, and the blear dark destroying the  
essence of the dream.

He turned from that array, and fled screaming, and  
stumbled as he ran

Of a sudden, in the smoke that belched around him, on  
the body of a man,

Who sate up cursing with a ruffian accent, the brutal  
Caliban.

And the brute let forth a yell, as he beheld them, that  
chattering ape-like pack:

“Woe’s me for urchin shows and winding adders for  
Prospero is back.

“Ah help, sweet Ariel!” With a blind ferocity he  
hurled him at the tribe

Of the mowing misbegotten, using language I had better  
not describe.  
And the heart of Quincibald struck thrice within him,  
with a burning burst of shame,  
As the lurdan turned to battle, calling only on the  
exquisite name.  
And he halted in his flight, seeing dimly how Caliban  
smote  
With iron fists the forehead of a devil that had fastened  
at his throat,  
While new voices thrilled the tumult where Diego came  
rushing through the dust,  
And Sintram with the flowery lance high-lifted for an  
overhanded thrust.  
And Tristram hurling headlong to the mellay shouted  
bitter and blithe.  
But confusion covered all, and he saw only the strange  
devils writhe,  
Locked in terrific clutch of the companions, and the  
heaving and the reeling.  
And he heard the rattle of ironic laughter and a thudding  
and a squealing,  
While he himself stood paralysed and rigid as a man  
stricken dumb  
By prevision of some vile unavoidable disaster yet to  
come.  
Grim thought made the world thin and unfamiliar like  
a mist slithering by:  
"Why in that combat smite not together even Ariel and I?  
"What I is here stricken with paralysis? My comrades  
what are they?



“And what are these unspeakable monstrosities that  
shred their lives away?  
“If this be living, who among all mortals the terms of it  
would keep?  
“And if this horror be a waking horror, then better were  
the sleep  
“Stony and lifeless of a fossil universe, where the blinded  
planets round  
“No more the stifled suns that hang for ever to their  
dark stations bound.”

### III

THE world dimmed to his sight. The thuds and curses  
were but a buzzing noise  
That fills a sick man's head, when high over him great  
pinions seemed to poise,  
Shedding an irised radiance about him. And he glanced  
up on high,  
Where the sudden and bright-flaming wings cut from him  
the blear vision of the sky.  
It was Ariel that a sea-change had suffered, for beautiful  
and vast  
Over the mean and dubious strife he hovered, and passed  
and repassed,  
Glancing at the grief of the companions with a grimace  
of disdain.  
Then by the black-veiled woman he alighted on a knoll  
above the plain.  
And there they two sate silent o'er the carnage, as if they  
did not know

Or care what manner of obscene disaster were raging  
there below.  
Nor did they stir, when from the hurly-burly rose terrible  
and clear  
The shriek of Sintram spitted by the devils on the shaft  
of his own spear.  
And sadder than bereavement or lost beauty is it for a  
man to stand  
On the edge of battle, held by the invisible that makes  
him hold his hand.  
“’Tis I betray,” thought Quincibald, “A coward idly  
standing by, that sees  
“His friends destroyed, while with that Queen of Horror  
Ariel dallies at his ease.  
“Nothing moves forward. And I stare supinely at an  
execrable crime,  
“As Asia stares at her own navel orifice and the wither-  
ing rose of time.  
“Here is the wizard movelessness, the certain pale mor-  
tality that rules  
“Our action and our thought, that crushes wise men,  
and eradicates the fools.  
“How is it Ariel, my familiar spirit, the deviser of my  
dreams,  
“Forsakes us in the horrible conflict of unutterable  
extremes,  
“And leaves all worth and valor to be strangled by these  
black reptilian things,  
“That rise at length out of the nether darkness? And  
his iridescent wings,

“Vaster, more beautiful, fierier than ever are folded  
at last.  
“And there is no beauty hovering in the future, or gleam-  
ing from the past.  
“No beauty!——” As he cried the shrouded woman  
rose upright, and wild light  
Shivered on her. Her impenetrable raiment seemed  
living and bright  
With a viewless inner fire, and to him pitiable she lifted  
up her hands,  
As one that in a spiritual struggle neither pleads nor  
commands,  
But shows with a gesture something grievous whereof  
words have no part,  
However they be naked and majestic and light flame in  
the heart.  
And with that gesture as it were strange shackles were  
unclenching in his brain.  
And with new eyes he glared at the wild landscape and  
the battle on the plain,  
Where trampled on by devils the companions rolled  
futile in their pain.  
And he saw that region as it were a sentence in a book  
printed clear,  
And the words of it were like a burst of poetry that  
chanted to the ear.  
The mountain with the fire and the cloud-draggled and  
overladen skies,  
And the great Greek pillar with the Gothic gargoyles  
meant somewhat in his eyes:

- “They say two things that contradict each other and  
both of them are lies.
- “They say that life is clear, and that an order is imma-  
nent in things.
- “They say that chaos and blind chance sit dicing for  
whatever fortune brings.
- “They say that good and evil have divided the universe  
in twain.
- “They say that God is truth, and that the devil is a  
figment of the brain.
- “Each by itself is vain, and taken together they are yet  
less than nought.
- “Yet forth between them springs the spirit exquisite and  
the beauty of all thought.
- “And the logic of things charming, the proportion and  
the elegance divine,
- “The figure of the world etched on the spirit with  
ineffable line.
- “Ah face that I denied, and therefore hidden! Ah loins  
I made teem
- “With devils that defeat the hope eternal and the glory  
and the dream,
- “I wrapped you in that darkness, cast you downward.  
You were lost from the sky.
- “I gave you that vileness, and your beauty like a worth-  
less thing put by,
- “Knowing not the strange stuff dreams are made on,  
nor the stuff that is not dream,
- “Confounded by their baffling play and inter-play that  
made me to misdeem,

“Till I came to this strange stand on the world’s frontier,  
where the stricken cosmos halts,  
“And the dream is no more true, and the reality than a  
vision is more false.  
“Is there ground underneath me? Is there sunlight  
smiting whitely the cloud  
“On the side of things I see not? Is there music, sweet  
chords singing loud  
“In majestic precincts of the spirit, where my feet do  
not tread?  
“Is there living thought that is not defeated by the  
triumphs of the dead?  
“For here at length at grips with the ideal is the arma-  
ment of fact.  
“Here the dream in the fancy’s torture chamber as a  
heretic is racked.  
“Here war the two extremes that in all matters have per-  
verted human-kind,  
“That swayed by good, or swayed by evil, ever is unal-  
terably blind.  
“Oh heat of the spirit, what a burning must there be  
that shall transfuse  
“These uttermost that war!—that wild dream flying,  
and that custom that we use.  
“What flame shall melt those twain with seven-fold  
melting and reduce them and refine?  
“And in what appalling spiritual crucible what the  
bronze that shall combine?  
“Out of that metal, molten by the vehemence of the  
agonizing soul,

"Come instruments of beauty and creation and passion  
and control.

"Oh mother of beasts born of what hateful union, at  
whose very thought men pale,

"Galatea of all terror and destruction, unveil—unveil!"  
But her cry answered his. With rended raiment she  
stood before his eyes,

The woman of the spirit whom we know not, and mis-  
value and despise,

The naked feminine, that thing creatress that must  
suffer in the soul,

That unseen life unto which all men living in the end  
must pay their toll,

The beauty of the dream, that with all horror is en-  
shrouded and is veiled,

That with our daily treason is deflowered, and by feeble  
custom staled,

Till in the crypt of darkness, in the tangible and execrable  
air,

Her overladen loins the loathly burden must intolerably  
bear.

Galatea that seen face to face in blinding white precincts  
of the dream,

Mixes with the man in what divine sweet union, to what  
lovely end supreme

Over all the darkness, burning with her crystalline and  
enigmatic flame,

Galatea of creation and destruction, the same—the same.

A WHITE light burned all summits of Argothica. A  
 passage in the cloud  
 Opened to the huge Sun, whose march processional came  
 glorious and proud  
 Down the precipitous mountain-sides volcanic, by the  
 fiery vapor crowned.  
 And Quincibald beheld the wounded comrades on the  
 barren ghastly ground.  
 There lay the torn Caliban defeated, rolling eye-balls  
 crimson shot;  
 There lay bright Sintram all his garment filthy, and his  
 whole flank one clot;  
 While staggered to his feet Diego Valdez glaring wildly  
 around.  
 Yet a sudden wind fretted the harp of Tristram, the  
 shadow of a sound.  
 Dumb, Quincibald walked toward them, while dim feel-  
 ing went through him, cold and hot.  
 But the devils of the darkness—He looked blankly  
 around him. They were not.  
 Gone, gone their agony all transmuted and the venom  
 absorbed  
 In some spiritual sunrise come over him immense and  
 full orbéd,  
 Lighting the height and depth with undulation of  
 immeasurable fire  
 Darted from the summits of all sorrow and abyssms of  
 desire,

And he felt move within him some wild threnody, and  
he rode upon the wings,  
That carried him and sang within the spirit as deliverance  
sings,  
Eternal Grief rose up to speak within him. All the  
sadness he had known  
Concentered in a moment past over when his hope was  
overthrown,  
A moment recreated that returned to him, rising up with  
a cry  
To tell him of endurance of beauty, who had seen beauty  
die:  
There is grief now—There is grief now, where hung my  
blanched laurel-bough,  
And dark has come, I know not how, and rain and the  
leaves' falling.  
I brought it there—I brought it there. It grows a  
terror in the air,  
A blackness, and a dim despair with troubled voices  
calling.  
And every fluttering flaming leaf burns through and  
through me like that grief,  
Beyond redemption or relief, through the sad autumn  
sailing,  
And the grave seasons of the soul wheel round an agon-  
izing pole,  
Where vain mysterious planets roll with wizard torches  
failing.  
Oh shaken to the soul, what matter, if the rains drive  
and the winds scatter



Oak leaf and maple, shred and tatter, to the last silence  
urging?

I am as they—I am as they, but trampled into deadlier  
clay,

Where sick and stricken souls decay, in one sheer madness  
merging.

Pain stretching me with triple tension, darkness un-  
pierced by man's invention,

Height towering our ascension, you have not force  
or power

To wound me so, in this distress, as my own bitter feeble-  
ness

Has hurt the soul without redress, in the execrable hour.

Beauty divine by me betrayed, come to mine aid, come  
to mine aid,

In the spiritual ambushade where the wild arrows fly  
Of all that I abhor and hate, the dreadful and the desolate  
Missiles of overwhelming fate, at whose mere breath  
we die.

To scape therefrom I have no wit, but to the dreadful  
brunt of it

I bow my forehead, and submit, and bear what is to bear,  
Whate'er she bear who passes now. Oh may the merciful  
allow

That she feel not upon her brow the breath of this  
despair.

Oh all men like me grieving, grieving, whether unbeliev-  
ing of believing,

Facing harsh fantasy deceiving, good luck to you, say I.

May you find force more fierce and drastic to grapple  
with deceit fantastic,  
Nor know when love lies dying how easy it were to die.

There is one guides me—There is one guides me, when my  
heart chides me—when my heart chides me,  
And the devil from the darkness rides me in the seven  
Hells of night.

When to the lashes that he wielded, I bowed in my  
despair, and yielded,  
Against myself, myself she shielded, and dark at length  
was light.

Oh wind that sweeps the avalanches of scarlet from the  
maple-branches,  
The blood of autumn nothing staunches, blow till you  
crack your cheek.  
Blow all your trumpets piping clear. Call back that  
music sweet and dear  
That was too delicate to hear, that voices may not speak.

Grant me to hear above the drone of autumn in the  
copses lone  
A sweetness and an undertone that I shall understand,  
Where hangs the unwithering laurel-bough. There is  
grief now—There is grief now,  
And over beauty's sacred brow the shadow of the hand.

The song ceased in him. He cast a glance about him  
where delivered from disgrace

Stood the comrades, yet besmeared with dust of battle,  
that looked him in the face,  
Not with reproach, but as men look bewildered whom  
mystery of fate  
Has clouded so they may not understand it, be it little,  
be it great.  
But he said to them: "Oh helpers in this torment that  
you strove to achieve.  
"You and I sought the white Galatea, and a rock is yet  
to cleave"  
He lifted the blood-dabbled spear of Sintram, and against  
his own breast  
He set the burning point, and with an effort he pushed it,  
and he pressed,  
Till his blood ran on the steel—with such an effort is it  
given us to heal  
The wound of our own soul—if we have valiance to  
cleanse it with the steel.  
Only so—only so is it vouchsafed us—and all other is a  
mock—  
To deliver the white Galatea from the rock—from the  
rock.  
Only so—only so is it given us in our care and in our cark  
To find the central fire that dwells only in the horror of  
the dark.  
So Quincibald for that season of reality by the spear  
wounded stood,  
Between all poles, the vision and the nightmare, the evil  
and the good,  
The thing that is, the thing men think, that ever are  
infinities apart.

The fires of love and thought, burning eternal in the  
brain and in the heart.  
Only he saw, divested of illusion, white, delicate, and  
pure,  
One coming toward him through the ghastly landscape  
mysterious and obscure.  
Nor was it Galatea, but another, one human of the earth,  
Instinct with spirit of the life that touches our death and  
our birth,  
A woman by life garlanded, and beautiful, and as real as  
hope or fear,  
As the breath in his own body, as his pulses, as his blood  
upon the spear.

